



NRC NEWS

U.S. NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION

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No. III-06-006

February 27, 2006

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NRC TO MEET WITH NUCLEAR MANAGEMENT CO. TO DISCUSS SAFETY SIGNIFICANCE OF ISSUE AT PRAIRIE ISLAND PLANT

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission staff will meet March 1 in Lisle, Ill., with representatives of Nuclear Management Company to discuss the safety significance of the plant's non-conservative emergency classification process at the Prairie Island Nuclear Power Station. The two-reactor facility is located in Welch, Minnesota.

The NRC staff has completed a preliminary assessment of the problem and concluded that it is of "low to moderate" safety significance. The meeting, called a Regulatory Conference, will seek the utility's evaluation of its significance.

The meeting will be held at 1 p.m. (CST) in the NRC's Region III Office, 2443 Warrenville Road, Suite 210, Lisle. Visitors should report to the second floor reception area. The public is invited to observe the business portion of the meeting and will have an opportunity to ask questions of the NRC staff before the meeting is adjourned.

NRC inspectors determined that the Prairie Island staff established a non-conservative emergency classification in the plant's Emergency Plan that, under certain flooding conditions, could result in the plant's failure to declare a Site Area Emergency.

The NRC has four emergency classifications, Site Area Emergency being the second highest of the four levels.

"It is crucial that nuclear plants properly classify the level of emergency because emergency classifications determine the appropriate level of response from the NRC, the plant, state and local officials to ensure that public health and safety are protected," said Geoffrey Grant, deputy regional administrator of the NRC's Lisle office.

In addition, the utility missed an opportunity to correct the non-conservative classification in the Emergency Plan when it was corrected in the plant's Updated Safety Analysis Report.

Under its safety significance determination process, NRC officials classify certain conditions at nuclear power plants as being one of four colors which delineate increasing levels of safety significance, beginning with green and progressing to white, yellow and red.

The NRC's preliminary evaluation determined the Prairie Island non-conservative emergency classification problem to be a "white" finding. Information presented by the utility in the Regulatory Conference will be used by the NRC staff, along with its inspection findings, to determine the final safety significance of the problem.

"White" inspection findings can lead to additional NRC inspections.

The details of the NRC inspection findings are discussed in Inspection Report 2005-11 which is available online in the NRC's electronic reading room. This report -- with the accession number ML060340623 -- may be viewed in the NRC's ADAMS document system, accessible at <http://www.nrc.gov/reading-rm/adams.html> . The final significance determination will be available on the NRC web site at <http://www.nrc.gov/what-we-do/regulatory/enforcement/current.html#reactors> .

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